

## Sources of Indian Idealism

In an important sense the perennial source of Indian idealism is a trend of speculation recorded in the *Upaniṣads*. It is by no means the only trend of Upaniṣadic thinking, as Śaṅkara and his followers want us to believe. But already in the *Upaniṣads* it is more or less the predominant trend and has the potential of developing into a very influential philosophy of the later times.

### 1. UPANIṢAD OR VEDA-END

The *Upaniṣads* are traditionally viewed as the end portions of the *Veda*. The word *veda* means knowledge, though to the followers of Vedic orthodoxy it means the most infallible knowledge which has been directly revealed. Concretely the name stands for the literary product of those people who call themselves Aryans and who, it is usually assumed, migrated into northern India as pastoral nomad tribes, without the art of writing but with considerable literary gifts combined with skill in warfare. How they gradually lose their racial identity while spreading over India, settle down and move from barbarism to civilisation is a story that will interest us mainly in so far as it throws light on their ideological development.

The earlier portions of this literature consist of songs, charms, and hymns. These were orally composed and transmitted to later generations by an amazingly meticulous retentive memory—a circumstance that accounts for their

name *śruti*, "that which is heard". To us these come down in the form of enormous compilations (*saṃhitā*), a form traceable to considerable antiquity. Of these compilations, the earliest and regarded as fundamental is the *Ṛgveda*. There are in addition three others—the *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*.

The *Ṛgveda* alone contains 1,028 songs in a total of 10,552 verses. Their total composition must have taken a long period of time. For modern scholars, its inner chronology is naturally a formidable problem, which they are still groping to solve. This much is certain that some of these songs are considerably earlier than others. Any hasty generalisation about the early Vedic people based on some stray *Ṛgvedic* evidence is liable to be fallacious.

The early songs of the *Ṛgveda*, which often surprise us by their primitive vigour and uninhibited imagination, are almost totally obsessed with the problems of physical survival. These express, so to say, without cessation the desire for food, cattle, progeny, victory, and so on. All this is mixed up with the mythological imaginings of a people, who see deities in many things that they do not understand and which fill them with awe easily passing into reverence. For instance, they see such deities in natural phenomena like the sun and wind, fire and forest, in the extraordinary might of their war chiefs or heroes, in the intoxicating power of their drink *soma*, and so on. The deities are important for them, because they are supposed to be aids to the fulfilment of elemental desires. As people with a rudimentary control over nature, the poets see deities even in their frankly pathetic wish-fulfilments like those of the prevention of abortion and the cure of phthisis.

People at such a stage of development are not expected to philosophise, and the fact is that the genuinely earlier songs of the *Ṛgveda* show no predilection for philosophy. Except for some admittedly later songs in this vast collection, speculations even in a proto-philosophical sense do not have a place in the *Ṛgveda* notwithstanding of course all the wild things often said about the great wisdom contained in it. As

H.P. Sastri<sup>1</sup> says, such statements are inspired more by an ignorant veneration for the *Veda* than an actual acquaintance with its contents.

The next phase of Vedic literary activity can be traced to the *Yajurveda*. This reaches its climax in colossal texts called the *Brāhmaṇas*. These texts are characterised by a shift of interest to discussion of the rituals or *yajña*. The rituals must have originally been something like the magical rites still to be observed among some present day primitive people surviving in certain pockets of the modern world. In their original primitive context, magical rites are not irrelevant. Their essence consists mainly in enacting "in fantasy the fulfilment of the desired reality. That is magic, an illusory technique, supplementary to real techniques. But though illusory, it is not futile." The ritual performance cannot have any direct effect on nature; but it can and does have an appreciable effect on the performers themselves. Inspired by the belief that it will bring into being the desired reality, they proceed to the task of actually bringing it into being with greater confidence and so with greater energy than before. And so it does have an effect on nature after all. "It changes their subjective attitude to reality, and so indirectly it changes reality."<sup>2</sup>

In this sense of being illusory techniques intended to aid real techniques, magical rites are originally connected with man's struggle with nature. As discussed in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, however, the rituals are uprooted from their original context, and their function passes into its opposite. These become tools for a new technique—that of man's struggle against man. The point is too obvious to be missed and Eggeling<sup>3</sup> observes in the introduction of his English translation of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*:

"The *Brāhmaṇas*, it is well known, form our chief, if not our only, source of information regarding one of the most important periods in the social and mental development of India. They represent the intellectual activity of a sacerdotal caste which .... was ever intent on deepening and extending

its hold on the minds of the people, by surrounding its own vocation with the halo of sanctity and divine inspiration. A complicated ceremonial, requiring for its proper observance and consequent efficacy the ministrations of the highly trained priestly class, has ever been one of the most effective means of promoting hierarchical aspirations. Even practical Rome did not entirely succeed in steering clear of the rock of priestly ascendancy attained by such-like means... The Roman statesmen submitted to these transparent tricks rather from considerations of political expediency than from religious scruples; and the Greek Polybius might well say that 'the strange and ponderous ceremonial of Roman religion was invented solely on account of the multitude which, as reason had no power over it, required to be ruled by signs and wonders'."

The change in the content of Vedic literature transforms also its form. In the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, instead of the inspired poetry of the *R̥gveda*, we have only insipid prose—in fact the dullest and the most cumbrous style that we have in Indian literature. One reason for this insipidity is the tendency to evolve symbolic interpretations of ritual trivialities, in the course of which scraps of *R̥gvedic* verses are often quoted without their context and with strange meanings read into them.

Such trivialities, though meaningless for us, are not irrelevant, for in terms of these the authors of the *Brāhmaṇas* also try to validate a new social norm, that emerges on the ruins of the ancient tribal one. The new norm is that of a split society in which the powers and privileges belong to the kings and nobles, though secondarily also to their ideological apologists—the priests. For the purpose of rationalising it, its essential features are sometimes projected on to ancient Vedic mythology. Thus the group of gods called Maruts are now made to stand for the common people while despotic power is represented by Indra and Varuṇa. Here are only a few examples from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*:

"Varuṇa, doubtless, is the nobility, and the Maruts are the people. He (the priest) thus makes the nobility superior to the people. And hence people here serve the Kṣatriya, placed above them" (ii. 5.2.6.).

"He muttered that verse addressed to Indra and referring to the Maruts. Indra, indeed is the nobility, and the Maruts are the people. 'They shall be controlled', he thought, and therefore that verse is addressed to Indra" (ii.5.2.27).

"Now some, on noticing any straw or piece of wood among the *soma*-plants, throw it away. But let him not do this; for—the *soma* being the nobility and the other plants the common people, and the people being the nobleman's food—it would be just as if one were to take hold of and pull out some food he has put in his mouth, and throw it away" (iii. 3.2.8.).

Some ritual details are sought to yield the symbolic interpretation of what "makes the *kṣātra* superior to the people. Hence the people here serve, from a lower position, the Kṣatriya, above them" (i.3.4.15). Similarly other ritual details are interpreted to show how "the Kṣatriya, whenever he likes, says, 'Hallo, Vaiśya, just bring to me what thou hast stored away'. Thus he both subdues him and obtains possession of anything he wishes by dint of his very energy" (i.3.2.15).

Many more examples like these may easily be quoted. But that is not necessary. What is necessary is only to note that in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts there clearly emerges a new political philosophy largely as a validation of the new social conditions. We shall mention it only in bare outlines, for without this we hardly understand the new philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*.

The political philosophy is traditionally expressed in terms of the four castes: Kṣatriyas (kings and nobles), Brahmins (priests and clerics), Vaiśyas (merchants and farmers) and Śūdras. What is meant by the last? The answer is suggested by a simple process of elimination. None of the first three classes is supposed to be responsible for the direct

labour of production.<sup>4</sup> Besides, the three classes taken together can constitute no more than a negligible minority of the community visualised. It follows therefore that by the Śūdras the texts can only mean the vast majority of the direct producers. And the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>5</sup> declares that they are some sort of sub-human beings: they are only to serve the others, they can be thrown out at will and they can be slain at pleasure.

The contempt for manual workers—and therefore for manual labour—is quite clear. The counterpart of this is the exaltation of mental work—of thought, of consciousness, of pure reason. We have in this the clue to Upaniṣadic idealism.

The *Brāhmaṇa* texts are appended to the ancient compilations and these *Brāhmaṇas* appended another class of literature called the *Āraṇyakas* or *forest-texts*. "These texts comprised everything which was of a secret, uncanny character, and spelled danger to the uninitiated, and which, for that reason, might only be taught and learnt in the forest, and not in the villages" (Winternitz).

With all that is supposed to be so very mysterious about the *Āraṇyakas*—which, incidentally, is nothing but the lingering of the belief in the magical efficacy of their themes or words—the historical importance of these texts consists in their shift of interest to speculations on proto-philosophical questions, howsoever hesitant such a first step to philosophy may be. This tendency becomes all the more prominent in the still later class of literature, the *Upaniṣads*, which in their turn are appended to the *Āraṇyakas*.

With the *Upaniṣads* the Vedic literature comes to its end. Hence they are also called *Vedānta* or *Veda-end*. The new social conditions, sought to be validated in the *Brāhmaṇas* mainly in terms of ritual trivialities, are more stabilized in the Upaniṣadic age. In accordance with the theoretical temper of the age, the new norm of society is given a more philosophical form:

Verily, in the beginning, this world was *brahma*, one only. Being one, he was not developed. He created still further a

superior form, the *kṣātrahood*..... Therefore there is nothing higher than *kṣātra*. Therefore at the coronation ritual, the Brahman sits below the Kṣatriya. Upon *kṣātrahood* alone does he confer that honour. The same thing, namely *brahmanhood* is the source of *kṣātrahood*. Therefore even if the king attains supremacy, he rests finally upon *brahmanhood*....

He was not yet developed. He created the commonality (*viś*)...

He was not yet developed. He created the *śūdra*...

He was not yet developed. He created still further a better form, Law. This is the power of the Kṣatriya class, namely Law. Therefore there is nothing higher than the Law. So a weak man controls a strong man by Law, just as if by a king. Verily, that which is Law is Truth.

Therefore they say of a man who speaks the truth, 'He speaks the Law', or of a man who speaks the Law, 'He speaks the Truth'. Verily, both these are the same thing

(Br. Up.i.4.11-4).

Is this a way of saying that philosophy is not unconnected with political power after all? What the philosophers strive after is truth. But truth is nothing but another way of looking at law. And it is from law that the kings and nobles derive their political power. The ruling ideas of the *Upaniṣads* are not unconnected with the ruling powers of the Upaniṣadic age.

It is important to see how the later Indian law-givers take up this Upaniṣadic suggestion and want to implement it on the Indian philosophical situation. That gives us some idea of the social function of Indian idealism.<sup>6</sup> For the present, we are concerned with the question of its origin.

We shall first describe the general process of the growth of the Upaniṣadic idealism and then pass on to see it in some detail.

## 2. EMANCIPATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

In sheer bulk, Vedic literature is simply staggering. It must have taken more than a thousand years for the whole of it to

be composed. What is nevertheless remarkable about it is the inner continuity of its development. It thus enables us to see how during a long period the material progress gained by successive generations of Vedic people enables them to reach a stage at which human labour is capable of producing much more than is necessary for its bare maintenance. A section of the community is thus no longer obliged to maintain itself by its own manual labour. Subsisting as it then does on the surplus produced by another section of the community, it finds leisure enough to specialise in speculative activity. Their thoughts and ideas, unlike those of their ancestors or the early Vedic poets, are no longer obsessed with the problem of physical survival only. They can more look forward to construct a speculative superstructure in its first real sense.

What is gained by this is undoubtedly of the most momentous significance. It is the realisation and recognition of the power of reason or of the creative role of consciousness. Without the emancipation of consciousness from the almost total preoccupation with the problem of survival, there is no beginning of theoretical activity in its full sense. In the *R̥gveda* we come across poets and seers, who, however inspired they are, are inspired only by the vision of the fulfilment of elemental desires. Their consciousness is engrossed with the problem of the struggle with nature and they do not have the leisure to philosophise. In the vast *Brāhmaṇa* literature we have indeed the glimpse of the emerging leisured class. But it is engrossed with the problem of the stabilisation of the political power of the kings and their ideological apologists—with what is called “applied politics, or the practice of controlling men with fear”.<sup>7</sup> The relative emancipation of consciousness of the leisured class is peculiarly consumed by this. The kind of intellectual atmosphere indicated by the texts is not the one in which the philosopher is encouraged to come to the fore. In the *Brāhmaṇas* we see priests rambling in the graveyard of primitive rituals; but we do not yet see the philosopher. The



picture of the philosopher first emerges in the *Upaniṣads*, when the leisured class fully stabilises its own power and can afford to have the serenity and tranquillity of unruffled contemplation. The first philosophers of the *Upaniṣads* raise questions of immense theoretical significance and they earnestly seek answers to these.

At the same time, this progress—great though it is—also creates a very grave danger for thought, particularly in the view of those that visualise an ideal society in which the manual workers are shorn of all prestige and privilege. The tools and techniques by which nature is interrogated belong to these direct producers. But they recede to the background, and along with them the growing stock of their experience and understanding. Philosophical activity, in so far as it is cut off from all these, easily tends to lose the spirit of interrogating nature. The result is much worse than contempt for the physical sciences. It is the creation of an illusion, resulting from the coercion of consciousness to a peculiar process of introversion. Knowledge is no longer intended to be the knowledge of objects. It wants to be knowledge of the subject itself—of the bare ego or of the pure self. As the *Upaniṣadic* idealists put it, the ideal of the philosopher is *ātmaratirātmakrīḍa*.—‘the libido fixed on the self, sporting with the self’ (Ch. Up. vii. 25.2). Extreme introversion, we are told,<sup>8</sup> brings into operation a delusion of grandeur. It is the delusion of the omnipotence of the bare ego. This ego, this self, wants to dictate terms to reality and demands to be recognised as the only reality. ‘I am that ultimate reality’—declares the *Upaniṣadic* idealist. The result is the lofty contempt for the material world, in which the philosopher himself has his being.

All this is putting the point in the terminologies of the psychologist. But that does not mean that we are trying to understand here the psychology of the *Upaniṣadic* idealists. If we are interested in their mental history, the reason is that it enables us to understand how the new world in which they live accounts for the fundamentals of their new world

outlook. In their political philosophy, active intercourse with nature is no better than the forced labour of the Śūdras. The philosopher takes pride in disowning the spirit of interrogating nature and is hence under no obligation to admit its reality.

Thus cut off from active intercourse with nature, the philosopher's consciousness runs the risk of imagining that it can rise to ever higher and ever more remote conditions where only thought remains and the things thought of fade out. This is the cult of pure reason, i.e. of reason only as a faculty of illusion. Consciousness, estranged from concrete living, becomes a form of sick consciousness. It is no longer *consciousness of something* but *something like consciousness-in-itself*—just consciousness, sheer consciousness—not the consciousness of the real men and women engaged in the active intercourse with nature and getting progressively enriched by this intercourse. Consciousness is now viewed as a "deified absolute"—too mysterious to be grasped by mundane thought and too awesome to be described by ordinary language.

Not that the emancipation of consciousness has such a necessary fate. There are thinkers in Upaniṣadic India who do not share this line of thinking. There are even those who, instead of taking a deified view of consciousness, want to understand it in the sober scientific sense.<sup>9</sup> In all presumption, they are the pioneers of the scientific tradition in Indian philosophy. Their consciousness does not develop into the morbid consciousness of their idealist colleagues.

In Upaniṣadic India, however, their prestige is already on the decline and there is a growing contempt for whatever was evaluated as the positive science of the age.<sup>10</sup> In the new intellectual atmosphere, those whose glory is specially boosted are philosophers for whom consciousness, fully alienated from actual life, wants to oppose and undermine life.

Such a philosopher is the great Yājñavalkya. He declares that reality is just a mass of consciousness (*vijñānaghana*). It

can neither be grasped by the normal organs of knowledge nor described in normal language. The only way of talking about it is to say, 'It is not this', 'It is not this'. While dreaming and further falling into the state of dreamless sleep, one gets progressively emancipated from the fetters of the material world and has a taste of this reality.

This is how the idealist outlook is first foreshadowed in Indian philosophy. But, as we shall presently see, it could hardly make any sense to the early Vedic poets, not merely because they are comparatively ignorant and do not know how to philosophise but because they are much too committed to the active intercourse with nature to afford such gambols of pure consciousness.

Thus for the understanding of the general history of ideological development, Vedic literature has great importance. It is a vast literature with an inner continuity of development, showing speculative consciousness not only in the making but also its eventual culmination in the cult of pure consciousness, the outcome of which is the idealist outlook.

An adequate survey of Vedic literature from this point of view forms the subject of an independent study. We have the scope here to note only a few salient points relevant for understanding the emergence of the idealist outlook.

### 3. CULT OF "SECRET KNOWLEDGE"

In the apparent chaos of the philosophical tendencies of the *Upaniṣads*, the more outstanding features with which the idealist outlook announces itself are on the whole clear. We have a clue to it in the name chosen for the texts.

The word *upaniṣad*—as suggested by its etymology and corroborated by its synonym *rahasyam*—means 'secret knowledge' or 'secret wisdom'. It is secret, because only a fortunate few of the age are supposed to be its custodians. At the same time, this knowledge is considered supremely important, because it is believed to have a marvellous potency of its own.

All this gives us some idea of the distinctive peculiarity of the *Upaniṣads*. Their main theme is knowledge, but not knowledge in the ordinary sense. It is knowledge restricted to a few of the community and is moreover believed to have a mysterious power of its own.

In the Vedic literature this is something new. The traditional way of admitting this is to describe the *Upaniṣad* as a new offshoot of the Vedic literature representing its 'knowledge branch' or *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. The concept of knowledge acquires in the *Upaniṣads* an altogether new and somewhat fabulous significance.

"Knowledge—not so much learning, but the understanding of metaphysical truths—was the impelling motive of the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads*... Knowledge was the one object of supreme value, the irresistible means of obtaining one's ends. The idea of the worth and efficacy of knowledge is expressed again and again throughout the *Upaniṣads* not only in connection with philosophical speculation, but also in practical affairs in life... So frequent are the statements describing the invulnerability and omnipotence of him who is possessed of this magic talisman, that *yah evaṃ veda*—'he who knows this'—becomes the most frequently recurring phrase of the *Upaniṣads*."<sup>11</sup> R. Hume (1951)

But this emphasis on the power of knowledge must not be misunderstood. It is not what Bacon means when he says that "the improvement of man's mind and the improvement of his lot are one and the same thing." Knowledge which is so much valued in the *Upaniṣads* is not at all intended to be a better insight into nature, serving as the basis of a better mastery of it. It is not supposed to be a guide to any course of action leading to some desired result. What is believed is that knowledge by itself fulfils all desires—i.e. fulfils these immediately, directly and automatically. How are we to understand such a belief?

There is only one answer to this. The belief is essentially magical. The typical *Upaniṣadic* way of expressing this magical belief is: "One who knows this reaches a full length

of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring, great in cattle, great in fame." In so far as this is a belief in magic, there is nothing new about it in the Vedic tradition. The belief is overwhelmingly obvious in the *Atharvaveda* and *Yajurveda*; it assumes the most grotesque form in the *Brāhmaṇas*. As appended to the *Brāhmaṇas* the *Upaniṣads* do not outgrow the belief in magic. This is already discussed by Edgerton<sup>12</sup> in his remarkable paper "Upaniṣads: What do they seek and why?"

What Edgerton does not discuss, however, is another important point. In spite of the lingering of the magical belief in the *Upaniṣads*, there is also something strikingly new about the texts. In the earlier strata of the Vedic literature, the concept of metaphysical wisdom is itself absent. Hence there is no question of viewing it as possessing magical potency. In the early Vedic age, in other words, the belief in the potency of magic is there. But it is the belief in the magical potency of the ritual acts. In the *Upaniṣads*, the belief is clearly displaced. It is now the belief in the magical efficacy of secret wisdom, from which this literature receives its name.

If the persistence of magical belief indicates that the Upaniṣadic thinkers do not fully outgrow their ancestral convictions, the displacement of the belief to secret wisdom shows the new theoretical temper of the age. What is decisive about the *Upaniṣads* is this fetish of secret wisdom. In it is absorbed whatever still survives of the earlier ideas and attitudes. In the altered conditions in which they live, the Upaniṣadic thinkers find the mere stock of their ancestral convictions inadequate for their own purposes, however otherwise strong the hangover of these may be. Thus, though in a number of passages great veneration is expressed for the ancient compilations or *saṃhitās*, other passages of the *Upaniṣads* state in so many words that the mere knowledge of the *saṃhitās* is not enough for the new pursuit of metaphysical wisdom. An example of the latter is the story of Nārada and Sanatkumāra. Nārada approaches the latter and declares that in the stock of knowledge he already

possesses are included the *R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda*. Apparently dissatisfied with all this, he wants to be initiated into the secret wisdom of Sanatkumāra. And the first thing that the philosopher tells him is that all these branches of knowledge—inclusive of the knowledge of the four ancient compilations—are ‘mere names’ (*nāman*): these have no more value than a merely nominal one.

#### 4. PHILOSOPHY AND NOBILITY

Who is this Vedic philosopher that has the audacity to declare that even the *R̥gveda*, etc. are mere names? We do not know the exact answer. Keith<sup>13</sup> says that he is just a mythical sage of the *Upaniṣads*. But that is saying something too vague to have a meaning. The *Upaniṣad* that tells the story of Sanatkumāra declares, “People call him Skanda—yea, they call him Skanda.” In Indian mythology Skanda is the name of the god of war. Does then Sanatkumāra belong to the class of the warrior nobles? Does the *Upaniṣad* want us to connect the new nobility with the new theoretical temper of the age?

The evidence of Sanatkumāra may itself be too thin to prove such a possibility. But the possibility is there and it cannot be easily dismissed. Many other legends of the *Upaniṣads* suggest it. Keith<sup>14</sup> sums these up as follows:

“In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (v.11–24) five learned Brahmins desire to learn from Uddālaka Āruṇi the nature of the Ātman Vaiśvānara; he doubts his ability to explain it, and as a result all six betake themselves to the king Aśvapati Kaikeya who gives them instruction, after first demonstrating the inaccuracy of their knowledge. In a narrative which is preserved in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (ii.1) and the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* (iv) a scholar, Gārgya Bālāki, undertakes to set out the nature of *brahman* to the king Ajātaśatru of Kāśī: he propounds twelve views—or in the *Kauṣītaki* sixteen—which are all defective, and the king then explains the Ātman to him by the principle of deep sleep, prefacing the observation that it is a reverse of the rule for a Brahmin to

betake himself to a Kṣatriya for instruction. Another legend in the *Chāndogya* (i.8.9) shows the Brahmin being instructed in the nature of ether as the ultimate basis of all things, by the king Pravāhaṇa Jaivali... Less important is the fact that the Brahmin Nārada is represented in the *Chāndogya* as being a recipient of information from Sanatkumāra, later the god of war, who tells the former that all this Vedic lore is mere name. The great text regarding the doctrine of transmigration is set out by Pravāhaṇa Jaivali to Āruṇi with the remark that the Brahmins have never before had this information, which so far had remained the monopoly of the Kṣatriyas. In a third version of this account, given in the *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad*, the king is Citra Gāṅgyāyani."

What do all these legends imply? Keith<sup>15</sup> is inclined to view these as "delicate and effective pieces of flattery", i.e. of the kings by the priests who compile the *Upaniṣads*. This is taking a rather casual view of the Upaniṣadic material. The other way of misunderstanding the same is to take the Upaniṣadic legends at their face value. This is done by those who argue that the Upaniṣadic philosophy is the creation of the Kṣatriya caste. However, even assuming that the legends are to be taken seriously, the fact remains that, except perhaps the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul, the theoretical innovations attributed to the kings and nobles are on the whole secondary in importance. Compared to these, the speculative constructions attributed to a thinker like Yājñavalkya is much more imposing. But Yājñavalkya is a priest and not a noble. This easily disproves the theory of the Kṣatriya origin of the Upaniṣadic philosophy in the sense in which it is usually put. But it proves nothing against the fact connecting the nobility with the new philosophy, for without the patronage of the nobles even Yājñavalkya cannot philosophise. The point is not how much the kings and nobles directly contribute to the philosophical activity of the age. The point rather is that without their political and financial support, Upaniṣadic idealism is not adequately explained. This is best illustrated by the case of Yājñavalkya.

## 5. MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS OF AN IDEALIST

Secret wisdom of the age, as we have seen, is imagined to have the most wonderful power of its own. The power is so great that it promises not merely worldly things like cattle, offspring and fame; it can even assure something which nothing else can.

In an often-quoted legend of the *Upaniṣad*, Yājñavalkya—about to retire—wants to have his property settled between his two wives, called Kātyāyanī and Maitreyī.<sup>16</sup>

Then said Maitreyī, 'If now, Sir, the whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal thereby?'

'No', said Yājñavalkya, 'as the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.'

Then said Maitreyī, 'What should I do with that through which I may not be immortal? What you know, Sir, that indeed tell me.'

This delights the philosopher and he initiates the wife into the secret knowledge he possesses.

The importance of this story for illustrating the new attitude of the *Upaniṣadic* philosopher is often emphasised. That is rightly done. A considerable number of other passages of the *Upaniṣads* asserts that the secret wisdom of the age promises immortality.<sup>17</sup> This is one aspect. But Yājñavalkya's story has to be understood in more aspects than one.

The word for the immortal used in it is *amṛta*. The early poets of the *R̥gveda* are aware of the word no doubt. They use it as a plain rhetoric, usually to describe euphoria induced by their intoxicating *soma*.<sup>18</sup> But the idea of 'secret wisdom' leading to immortality never occurs to them; nor the idea of 'property settlement' in the *Upaniṣadic* sense. The reasons for this are quite simple. They do not have property as Yājñavalkya does<sup>19</sup> and hence no opportunity to cultivate the cult of secret wisdom.

We shall presently see from where this property of the philosopher comes. But whatever its source, it obviously



relieves him of the problem of maintaining himself by the manual labour of his own. How can he, without being thus relieved, devote himself to the cult of pure consciousness? The basic requirement for this is leisure enough for the purpose. The contempt for the verdict of practice on which depends the idealist outlook throughout its Indian career can be possible for the philosopher only in so far as he is relieved of the basic responsibility of practical life—in short, in so far as he is ensured of a leisured class existence.

By contrast the material conditions in which the early Vedic poets live do not permit them all this. With their comparatively rudimentary control over nature, they cannot but be obsessed with the problem of physical survival—a problem which is solved in ancient society by a greater degree of collective functioning of the community. The devotion of a selected few of the community to the cultivation of pure speculation is not yet objectively possible, for the community does not produce enough surplus to meet their material requirements. In the earlier strata of the *R̥gveda*, songs ennobling the collective labour of the community are in fact innumerable. I have elsewhere quoted some of these.<sup>20</sup>

In the Upaniṣadic India—i.e. in the newly developed states of the Indo-Gangetic plain of about the eighth and seventh century B.C.—things are different. There is considerable progress in the control over nature, thanks mainly to the introduction of iron implements on some scale and the improved technique of agriculture and handicrafts, which are now added to cattle raising. Human labour acquires the ability to produce much more than is necessary for its bare maintenance. At the same time, the products of labour do not go to the labourers themselves, or, as the early Vedic poets put it, 'shared out' among the tribesmen. In fact, this activity of sharing out is so important to these early poets that in their mythological imagination it is raised to the status of veritable deities. They call these deities Bhaga and Aṃśa, literally 'the share'.<sup>21</sup> In the Upaniṣadic India, however, society is split into a ruling class and a toiling class. The

former, consisting mainly of the king and nobles, usurp the surplus produced by the latter. An early Indian law-giver wants to rationalise this accomplished fact. Describing the ideal mode of living of the king or noble, he says:

"He shall live on the surplus."<sup>22</sup>

(Gautama)

The accumulation of this surplus makes them enormously wealthy in terms of the age. Depending on this surplus to maintain themselves on a grand scale, they have all the leisure of life to pursue and patronise the cult of pure consciousness. The kings surrounded by their flatterers (*rājanya bandhu*) are often described by the *Upaniṣads* as taking a keen interest in philosophical discourses. But this does not mean that they have the monopoly of the 'secret wisdom'. Outside the circle of the nobility, there are persons with exceptional gifts claiming profounder wisdom endowed with more imposing power.

Such a person is the famous Yājñavalkya.

Attracted by the magical potency of his wisdom—and above all perhaps by the rumour that this wisdom ensures even immortality or an escape from death—one of the prosperous kings of the age, Janaka of Videha, is only too eager to part with a substantial portion of his own fortune to the philosopher as payment for being initiated into his secret wisdom. Without being a direct plunderer of the surplus, Yājñavalkya becomes entitled to a part thereof.

Nothing is more attractive for the kings than the prospect of overcoming death or attaining immortality. It is basically the same temptation that leads the Pharaohs of Egypt to waste the most colossal amount of wealth to build pyramids. Compared to them, the kings of the petty Upaniṣadic states have less to spend. But that is not the point. The point is that for these kings also the temptation of overcoming death is irresistible. They spend for it according to their means.

All this does not mean that for Yājñavalkya and his co-philosophers the promise of immortality ensured by their secret wisdom is necessarily a sales talk. It may as well be a part of their make believe. But whether make believe or not,

it does pay. And because it pays, it can relieve the philosopher of the problem of maintaining himself by his own labour. It even enables Yājñavalkya to amass considerable property of his own—the property that he wants to settle before retirement. For him it is quite logical to tell the wife that this property does not ensure immortality; immortality is ensured only by his secret wisdom. Why else should his patron agree to pay him so well for being initiated into the secret wisdom? However, what he does not add is that though this property does not ensure immortality, it can and does ensure the leisure for cultivating the cult of pure wisdom. Without the solid support of this material wealth—the grand gift of his patron—the alternative for him is working for his living. His philosophy of pure contemplation does not harmonise with a life of manual labour. From this point of view, his worldly assets are not so unconnected with his world-denying philosophy as he wants his wife to believe.

Thus for understanding Yājñavalkya and his philosophy it is necessary to take note of his property and understand its sources. Where does it come from? The *Upaniṣads* are not at all vague about it. Here is a typical description of the general setting of his philosophical discourse<sup>23</sup>:

Janaka, king of Videha, was seated.

Yājñavalkya came up.

To him the king said, 'Yājñavalkya, what brings you here? Is it because you want cattle or hair-splitting discussions?'

'Indeed both, your majesty', he said.

We shall presently see that in Upaniṣadic days material wealth is largely measured by cattle. Thus this great idealist philosopher, with his intense contempt for the material world, shows no hesitation to admit that he is not interested merely in philosophy; he is also interested in the payment for it. Metaphysically the cattle—like everything else in the world—are unreal no doubt. But these are not to be ignored, for without these the metaphysician is not ensured of his

leisured class existence that enables him to spin the world-denying philosophy.

Yājñavalkya is thus confronted here with a question much more serious than that of mere theoretical consistency. It is too early for the Indian idealists to invent the philosophical trick of distinguishing between the purely provisional truth of practical life (*vyāvahārika* or *saṃvṛti satya*) and truth in its highest metaphysical sense (*pāramārthika satya*). Yājñavalkya does not say that the cattle, though ultimately unreal, are real for practical life only. Compared to the later idealists, he is naive enough to admit that he is interested in cattle, too, whatever may be their ultimate metaphysical status. How indeed can he be fully earnest about hair-splitting discussions without being provided with the material means for the purposes? Belonging as he does not to the class of the plunderers of the surplus produced by the direct producers, he has to depend on a part of the plundered surplus which he expects to receive from the king. And the king in his turn is only too eager to offer him the material wealth he needs, for his wisdom promises even immortality. At the end of each of his discourses on philosophy, the king offers him the gift of a thousand cows and a bull as big as an elephant—a very considerable amount of wealth for the Upaniṣadic age.

At the end of the final discourse Yājñavalkya declares, 'Verily, Janaka, you have reached fearlessness.' Janaka, king of Videha, says, 'My fearlessness comes unto you, noble Sir, you who make us know fearlessness. Adoration to you! Here are the Videhas; here am I at your service.'<sup>24</sup>

Fearlessness means here the fearlessness of death. Before passing on to see how Yājñavalkya's philosophy of the pure spirit creates such an assurance for the king, let us try to be clearer about Yājñavalkya's awareness—though in his own way—of the material basis of this idealist philosophy.

If Yājñavalkya is the greatest idealist philosopher of the *Upaniṣads*, he is also the most money-minded thinker of the age. Elsewhere he comes out with the rather startling admission that he has respect for metaphysicians interested

in the ultimate reality, what he is interested over and above is the possession of cows. As he puts it, "Reverence be to him who is most learned in sacred writ! We are but hankering after cows."<sup>25</sup>

The legend in which this occurs brings us back to the same setting of philosophical discussion that we have just noted. Janaka, king of Videha, gets a sacrifice performed and lavishes gifts on the priests performing it. A large number of them are naturally attracted to his assembly. The king wants to find out who among these priests possesses the highest wisdom. So he has a thousand cows enclosed in a place, with ten pieces of gold tied to the horns of each. And he declares that the wisest of the priests is to take these away. While the other priests hesitate, Yājñavalkya asks his pupil to take them away on his behalf. This enrages the other priests. How is it that Yājñavalkya takes it for granted that he is the wisest among them all? To this the philosopher comes out with the statement just quoted. He has respect for metaphysics; but he is also aware of the need of material wealth.

But the other priests want him to prove his philosophical superiority. So they start questioning him. Significantly their first question is whether he knows the secret to immortality: "Since everything here is coextensive with death—everything is overpowered by death—how can the sacrificer (i.e. the royal donor) move beyond death?"

The *Upaniṣad* wants us to believe that Yājñavalkya alone knows the answer to this. But what is the answer? The metaphysical discourse attributed to him is a long one. Its main point is the gradual unfolding of the idealist outlook. But how is this outlook supposed to overcome death and ensure immortality? There is only one way of doing this and that is to remove from the realm of reality the physical world as a whole, and along with this the physical facts of birth and death. As Yājñavalkya argues, the soul which is pure consciousness and bliss, is the only reality. Being completely uncontaminated by anything material, it is by nature aloof

from what appears to the mortal eyes as birth and death. Thus death, like birth, is completely unreal. How can one who knows this be any longer haunted by the fear of death?

This is not ensuring oneself against the fact of death, before which the philosopher is as helpless as any other mortal. But it is a way of inducing a subjective change into oneself which helps one to overcome—though only in ideas and imagination—the sense of death and the terrors thereof.

Significantly, being conscious in his own way of the material basis of his idealism, Yājñavalkya never forgets his patron while talking of immortality. He declares that the immortality he is talking of is to be attained not only by the metaphysician who knows the ultimate reality to be pure spirit but also by his patron on whose gifts the metaphysician subsists<sup>26</sup>:

When born, indeed, he (the spirit) is not born,  
Who would again beget him?

Reality is pure consciousness and pure bliss.

It is the goal reached by the donors of wealth,

As well as by those who are firmly established on the  
knowledge of this.

At least one point of this declaration is striking and it is in need of some discussion. The donor and the philosopher reach the same goal. What needs to be added to it, however, is that they reach it in different ways. The philosopher creates for the donor the illusion of immortality. The donor creates for the philosopher the material conditions for this illusion-making.

These conditions are in short the conditions of social parasitism. It kills the philosopher's spirit of interrogating nature, coerces his consciousness to total introversion and makes him a philosopher of pure spirit, for which death is as meaningless as birth.

For our understanding of the sources of idealism, this parasitism of the philosopher is of crucial importance. One way of judging it is to have some concrete idea of the

philosopher's material assets. We begin with some clues to these as preserved in the *Upaniṣads*.

In the account of the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* just quoted, Yājñavalkya's pupil drives away for him one thousand cows, with ten *pādas* of gold tied to the horns of each. In the next account of the same *Upaniṣad*, king Janaka—awed by Yājñavalkya's breath-taking flights of pure reason—four times offers him 'a thousand cows and a bull as large as an elephant'.<sup>27</sup> This is immediately followed by another account of the same text in which the same philosopher receives from the same donor for the same reason five thousand cows, in instalments of one thousand each.<sup>28</sup> This is immediately followed in the *Upaniṣad* by the account already referred to—the account in which the philosopher wants to have his property settled between his two wives, Kātyāyanī and Maitreyī.

The logical sequence followed by the text is not to be overlooked. It tells us of the need felt by the philosopher for property settlement only after describing the process of its accumulation.

Let us try to be clearer about the property accumulated. Not to speak of other accounts, the three that we have just mentioned tell us of a total of ten thousand cows, besides the ten thousand *pādas* of gold. But this is only elementary arithmetic, and lest we be misled by it the *Upaniṣad* tells us also of the bulls as big as elephants. The cows accumulated by the priest-philosopher also multiply. We have in another *Upaniṣad* a rough calculation of the rate of this multiplication. Satyakāma Jābāla goes to Haridrumata Gautama, desiring to be a student of sacred knowledge.

After having received him as a pupil, he (the priest-philosopher) separated out four hundred lean, weak cows and said, 'Follow these, my dear.'

As he was driving them on, he said, 'I may not return without a thousand.'

So he lived away a number of years. When they came to a thousand, the bull spoke to him, saying: 'Satyakāma!'

'Sir', he replied.

'We have reached a thousand, my dear. Bring us to the teacher's home.'<sup>29</sup>

If this rate of increase satisfies the Upaniṣadic calculation in one case, there is no reason why it should not be applicable to another. The ten thousand cows received by Yājñavalkya only according to three accounts of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* are soon supposed to multiply into twenty-five thousand. It does not take much time again for the twenty-five thousand to multiply into 62,500. And so on.

All this is talking too much of cows no doubt. Why do the *Upaniṣads* do it? Keith answers: "It is clear that cattle, not land, was the real foundation of wealth, just as in Ireland, Italy (cf. *pecunia*), Greece, etc. Cattle could be, and were, used individually, but land was not open to a man's free disposal; no doubt, at any rate, the consent of the family or of the community might be required."<sup>30</sup>

Thus assuming that the *Upaniṣad* does not want us to look at the priest-philosopher as a member of the landed aristocracy, there is no doubt that it wants us to look at him as an extremely wealthy person—a real aristocrat of the age. Besides, the question of land is not to be totally dismissed, for there is the physical problem of accommodating the cattle. How does the priest-philosopher solve this problem?

Whatever may be the system of land tenure in Upaniṣadic India, there are in these texts unmistakable accounts of the gift of villages by the kings and nobles to the custodians of secret wisdom.<sup>31</sup> We read of this more explicitly in the Pāli canonical literature of the Buddhists, which give us an idea of the social conditions not much later than that of the *Upaniṣads*:

"The Brahmin villages of settlements were mainly in the Magadhan and Kosalan regions ... The reason for the presence of the Brahmin *gāmas* in these two regions is likely to be found in the early development of *brahmadeyya* land ownership in these areas. *Brahmadeyya* was the royal gift of land or an estate



to well known Brahmins and others, for the services, probably ritual in nature, which they rendered to the king. Some of the *brahmadeyya* lands are specially described as Brahmin *gāmas*. Khanumata and Opasads, which are given respectively by kings Pasenadi and Bimbisāra to the Brahmin Kūṭadanta and Canki are thus described. On the other hand, Campā, Ukkattha and Salavatika, although these places belong to the Brahmins Sonadanta, Pokkharasādi and Lohicca respectively, are known only as *brahmadeyya* lands... In Ekanala, the Brahmin farmer *Bharadvāja* has so much land that he needs 500 ploughshares to plough it."<sup>32</sup>

We do not read in the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* of any royal gift of a village to Yājñavalkya. But the presumption is that he has some villages or at least pens vast enough to accommodate his ever-multiplying thousands of cows. If so, the further presumption is that there is also need for him to have proper security arrangement for such an enormous amount of wealth.

This leads us to the description of the prosperous Brahmin given by the Buddha—the Brahmins who "have themselves guarded in fortified towns, with moats dug out round them and cross-bars let down before the gates, by men girt with long swords."<sup>33</sup>

The picture of the parasitism of the priest-philosopher is not difficult to reconstruct. It is in this parasitism that we have the clue to his world-denying idealism.

The Buddha is himself inclined to look at these new parasites—the prosperous Brahmins of his age—as a fall from the simple moral grandeur of the ancient Vedic poets. He asks one of them<sup>34</sup>:

"But just so, Ambaṭṭha, those ancient poets (or seers)... the authors of the verses... whose ancient form of words so chanted, uttered or composed, the Brahmins of today chant over again and rehearse, ...that you should on that account be a seer or have attained the state of a seer...? Now, what think you Ambaṭṭha? What have you heard when Brahmins old and well stricken in years, teachers of yours or their

teachers, were talking together—did these ancient poets, whose verses you chant over and repeat, parade about, well groomed, perfumed, trimmed as to their hair and beard, adorned with garlands and gems, clad in white garments, in the full possession and enjoyment of the five pleasures of sense, as you and your teacher too do now?"

The Buddha is evidently transforming the reality of the rudimentary control over nature of the ancient Vedic poets into a romantic picture of their great asceticism. The primitive poets are really not so ascetic as he wants us to think. At the same time, where the Buddha is unquestionably correct is that these ancient poets live a life quite different from the parasitical one of their later champions. As a result, the philosophy of the pure spirit of the Upaniṣadic idealists can hardly make any sense to them.

We shall have a brief note on the general theoretical temper of these ancient poets and then pass on to see why this is so different from that of the Upaniṣadic idealists.

## 6. PRIMITIVE PROTO-MATERIALISM OF THE ANCIENT VEDIC PERIOD

Among the later Indian philosophers those who want to take their stand exclusively on Upaniṣadic idealism are the Advaita Vedāntins. According to them, an appropriate descriptive epithet of their philosophy is *Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā* or *Śārīraka* philosophy. *Śārīraka* means the body that is filthy. Upaniṣadic idealism is given such a name because it is the philosophy of the pure spirit or soul which, much to the annoyance of the idealists, remains imprisoned as it were in the defiled body.

The underlying idea is strongly reminiscent of the ancient Greek idealist, Plato, who—disgusted with the body as a prison for the soul—goes to the extent of describing the desire for death as the right mood of the philosopher. A few centuries before Plato, Yājñavalkya also gives an enviable description of a dying man who, while dying, gets released

from the fetters of the defiled body and the deceptions of the sense-organs. It is tempting to quote here a few lines from these two eminent ancient idealists and see how intense a contempt for the body is characteristic of the ancient idealist outlook. Argues Plato:

"As long as we are encumbered with body, and our soul is contaminated with such an evil, we can never fully attain what we desire; and this, we say, is truth. For the body subjects us to innumerable hindrances on account of its necessary support... and it fills us with longings, desires, fears, all kind of fancies, and a multitude of absurdities, so that, as it is said in real truth, by reason of the body it is never possible for us to make any advance in wisdom... It has then in reality been demonstrated that if we are ever to know anything purely, we must be separated from the body, and contemplate the things themselves by mere soul. And then, as it seems, we shall obtain that which we desire, and which we profess ourselves to be lovers of—namely wisdom—when we are dead, as reason shows, but not while we are alive. For if it is not possible to know anything purely in conjunction with the body, one of these two things must follow: either that we can never acquire knowledge, or only after we are dead, for then the soul will subsist apart by itself, separate from the body, but not before."<sup>35</sup>

Such is the *śārīraka* philosophy of ancient Greece. The way in which Yājñavalkya puts it is to give an enviable description of a dying man—enviable, because while dying, he is getting progressively relieved from the fetters of the body:

He is becoming one, they say, he does not see.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not smell.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not taste.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not speak.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not hear.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not think.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not touch.

He is becoming one, they say, he does not know.

The point of his heart becomes lighted up. By that light the self departs, either by the eye, or by the head, or by other bodily parts. After him, as he goes out, the life goes out. After the life, as it goes out, all the breaths go out. He becomes one with intelligence...<sup>36</sup>

This, in short, is an important feature of the philosophy of the pure spirit. It is a philosophy of the most intense contempt for the body, so much so that it goes to the extent of glorifying death as by far the greatest bliss conceivable. Paradoxically, the cult of death is also made to pass as the philosophy ensuring immortality. This combination of the opposites is possible, because in the philosophy of pure spirit birth is as fictitious as death.

For understanding the development of Vedic thought, however, it is necessary to note that a philosophical view like this would have gone completely over the heads of the early Vedic poets, who feel that nothing is more important than nourishing the body with food and drink. The feeling is so intense that they are led even to conceive food—called *pitu*—as one of their deities. The way in which they praise this deity, though primitive, is also quite refreshing, particularly when we return to it after the morbid speculations on the desirability of death. We quote in rough rendering a part of the song in praise of food from the *R̥gveda*<sup>37</sup>:

“Savoury food, honeyed food, we welcome thee; be our protector. Come to us, beneficial food, we welcome thee; be our protector. Come to us, beneficial food—a source of delight, a friend of the well-respected, and having no enemy. Your flavours, oh food, are diffused through regions, as the winds are spreading through the sky. These men, oh food, who are your distributors—oh most sweet food—they who are the eaters of thee and thy juices, increase like you with elongated necks. The minds of the mighty deities, oh food, are fixed upon thee... Oh food, the wealth which is associated with the mountains went to thee. Oh sweet one, listen to us and be accessible to our eating. And since we enjoy the

abundance of the waters and plants, therefore, oh body, may you grow fat. And since we enjoy the drink *soma*, the mixture with boiled milk and boiled barley, therefore, oh body, may you grow fat..."

Specially striking is the last refrain: *vātāpe pīva it bhava*, 'Oh body, may you grow fat.'

This is not a philosophical view, of course, and it is not meant to be one. But its evidence is not to be overlooked. It does represent a theoretical temper and that is fully opposed to the *śārīraka* philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*. And the point is that the general theoretical temper underlying the song just quoted, rather than being exceptional, is really typical of the ancient songs of the *Rgveda*.

It is tempting to raise here another question.

In later Indian philosophy, the most outspoken materialists are called the Lokāyatas or Cārvākas, according to whom there is nothing over and above the body. They are despised in various ways. One of these is to say that the very name *Cārvāka* is indicative of the vulgarity of the philosophy. It is supposed to be derived from the root *carv*, meaning 'to eat' or 'to chew'. These philosophers are called the Cārvākas because—unaware of any lofty ideal—they allegedly care only for eating and drinking.

Such an etymology of the name is probably fanciful. But even admitting it, we cannot escape a simple question. Which of the later philosophical views—the Cārvāka and the Śārīraka—suits the theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets? There is only one answer to it: the poets go into ecstasy over food for the solid reason that it makes the body fat. It is possible to imagine the ancient poets understanding the Cārvāka philosophy, but not the Śārīraka. This is one of the reasons why I have elsewhere<sup>38</sup> tried to describe the ancient Vedic thought as indicative of primitive proto-materialism. It is on the ruins of this that later emerges the idealistic outlook.

## 7. PRIMORDIAL UNITY OF WISDOM AND ACTION

It remains for us to discuss only another point in this connection. What is it that accounts for the difference in the theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets from that of the Upaniṣadic idealists?

Compared to the Upaniṣadic philosophers, the Ṛgvedic poets are undoubtedly ignorant people. Their stock of ideas is very poor; their capacity for conceptual construction is so limited that they can only imagine deities in things they do not understand. The significance of evidence and reasoning for answering questions concerning truth and reality is something beyond their mental horizon. Indeed they are not even properly aware of such questions, not to mention answering these. The Upaniṣadic philosophers are far ahead of them. For them these questions acquire great importance and they try to answer these on the strength of evidences and arguments.

All these are quite on the surface. But these do not answer the question we are asking ourselves. It is not the question concerning the richness of thought but rather of its general direction. The want of richness of early Vedic thought compared to the Upaniṣadic one is easily understood in terms of the progress of thought. But the point is that in the Upaniṣadic idealism, we see not only a progress of thought but also a dangerous turn taken by it. In spite of developing superior equipment for knowing, the idealists proceed with its aid only to condemn the objects of knowledge. Their way of knowing becomes hostile to what is known, i.e. what is known by experience and the application of reason. This hostility of knowledge to the things known is not to be found in the poets of the *Ṛgveda*, however limited may be the range of their experience and however imperfectly developed may be their power of the application of reason.

In short, the general direction of their thought is different. It is in need of an explanation. How are we to explain it?

We have tried to understand the general direction of

thought of the Upaniṣadic idealists in terms of their cult of secret wisdom—wisdom estranged from action. It will negatively confirm this understanding if we can now see that the absence of such a general direction of thought of the early Vedic poets is correlated to the absence in their consciousness of any separation of wisdom from action.

Is there this negative confirmation?

It is there and the unique advantage of the Vedic literature is that it enables us to see it clearly. Composed over a period of a thousand years or more, it retains a close continuity of inner development. From the *Upaniṣad* or *Veda*-end we can move backwards to the earlier strata of the Vedic literature. When we do this, we have the glimpse—distant and dim though it may be—of at least the relics of the primitive past qualitatively different from that of the Upaniṣadic age. What is so important about it is that it enables us to see—depending all the time on definite literary records—that just as the Upaniṣadic society emerges on the ruins of an ancient undifferentiated community, so also the theoretical temper of the Upaniṣadic idealists emerges on the ruins of an ancient theoretical temper, which is perhaps best described as representing a primordial complex of wisdom and action. Wisdom, far from becoming the secret possession of a fortunate few, is not yet dissociated from action. Hence it does not develop any contempt for nature with which, through action, men have intercourse. We have in this the clue to the primitive proto-materialism of the early Vedic period.

I have elsewhere discussed the relics of the primitive undivided community in the *Rgveda*. I shall try to discuss here some of the relics of the primordial unity of wisdom and action as found in the *Rgveda*.

Mental labour in its most exalted form, as known to these pre-literate poets, is the oral composition of songs, or, in their own words, 'making verses by the mouth'.<sup>39</sup> However, to themselves it is only a craft and its glory is best understood

on the model of the other craft they know so well, viz. that of the carpenter fashioning the chariot.

For understanding the general theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets, this point is of crucial importance. We shall discuss a few evidences in some detail.

An entire hymn of the *R̥gveda*<sup>40</sup> has for its theme the drunken monologue of Indra, the war-chief. It describes all sorts of great feats that he boasts of performing under the influence of *soma*. One of these is that of composing the Vedic song as beautifully as the carpenter makes the chariot. As Indra puts it, *ahaṃ taṣṭeva vandhuram paryacāmi hr̥dā matim* (x.119.5). Sāyaṇa, the most orthodox Vedic commentator, interprets it as meaning the act of 'marking by the mind' the hymn in the way in which the carpenter makes the chariot-seat. This cannot be said by one for whom mental labour is superior to manual labour. The ancient poet knows nothing about the mysterious power of pure reason.

This evidence cannot be dismissed as drunken raving only, for the way in which Indra here views the art of poetry is a frequently recurring theme of the *R̥gveda*.

In a song in praise of Indra, the poet Puruccheṣa says: this song is fashioned for you by one desirous of wealth, just as the carpenter endowed with wisdom (*dhīraḥ*) fashions the chariot (i.130.6). The adjective *dhīraḥ*, 'endowed with wisdom', for the carpenter may appear to us as unconventional, for we are not accustomed to associate wisdom with manual operation. We think of the wise man mainly as a contemplator, not a craftsman. But the ancient poets do not think so. For them manual skill is itself a mark of wisdom. Wisdom is yet to be dissociated from action in the consciousness of the Vedic poets.

As if to leave nothing vague about their own attitude, these poets freely use the words *ataksāma* and *ataksam* for poetry-making. These words, derived from the root *takṣ*, 'to make or to fashion', refer primarily to the carpenter's craft. It is this root that gives to the Vedic people the words for the carpenter—*takṣan* and *taṣṭṛ*.<sup>41</sup>



In a song in praise of Agni, the poet says, 'I have fashioned this song for thee just as the wise carpenter fashions the chariot' (v.2.11). The expression used is: *ratham na dhīrah svapā atakṣam*. As describing the art of poetry, such an expression appears extraordinary particularly for people to whom this art represents intellectual work par excellence. But exactly the same expression is used in another song—this time in the context of offering to Indra freshly composed songs along with clothes and chariot (v.29.15). Elsewhere, a poet says, 'Let these songs please the deities Aśvins—songs that are fashioned by us (*takṣāma*) as beautifully as the carpenter fashions the chariot.' (v.73.10). Describing his own composition another poet says, 'This extensive hymn of mine, shining with brightness, is moving towards the sun and brings welfare to men. I have composed it in the way in which the carpenter makes a strongly built chariot fit for being drawn by the horse' (x. 93.12).

Even today, we talk of 'brushing up a poem'. The ancient poets also speak of it. But they speak of it in their own way—in the analogy of scraping the wood as is done by the carpenter. Thus the poet says, *abhi taṣṭeva didhayā maṇiṣām*, 'brighten up the song like the carpenter' (iii.38.1). Sāyaṇa interprets it to mean brightening up the song in the way in which the carpenter makes a piece of wood shining by scraping it.

In accordance with the general attitude underlying all this, the *R̥gveda* conceives the poets as a *kāru* (ii.39.8; viii. 62.4; etc.). Derived from the root *kr*, 'to make', it means the maker. As the maker of song the poet has neither more nor less of social prestige than any other—the carpenter working on wood, the physician healing diseases, the girl grinding corn on the stone, the arrow-maker making arrows with sticks, stones and feathers. This is the impression we have from the often-quoted labour song of the *R̥gveda* (ix.112), which in spite of describing the division of labour in society, harps on the theme of the harmonious working of all.

Certain philological evidences indicate that in the ancient

period any sharp distinction between wisdom and action is practically unknown. What the ancient poets are aware of is some kind of a primordial unity of the two—a point not easy to understand in accordance with later preoccupations. Here are a few examples.

In the *R̥gveda*, we come across an apparently peculiar word, *vidmanāpasah*. We can perhaps best translate it as those that possess 'the wisdom of action' or 'knowledge which is also the know how'. Understandably, it is used in the context of both manual and mental work: chariots with excellent wheels are fashioned with its aid (i.111.1) and it also forms the basis of the poets' craft (i.31.1).

This is a rather rare word in the *R̥gveda* no doubt. It occurs only twice in the vast collection. But not so are certain other words of more decisive significance. The Vedic poets freely use certain words to mean sometimes wisdom and sometimes action. Such words are *dhī*, *śaci*, *kratu*. These mean wisdom; but these also mean action. All this creates an obvious problem for the compiler of the *Nighaṇṭu*, the earliest glossary of Vedic words. Are these to be put in the list of 'words meaning wisdom' (*prajñā nāmāni*) or in the list of 'words meaning action' (*karma nāmāni*)? The problem is solved by him by putting the words in both the lists.

These words, therefore, tell their own story. To the ancient poets, wisdom may as well be viewed as action, and action as wisdom. They are not yet aware of a sharp difference between the two. The only wisdom they care for is that of practical activity. Though primitive, it represents the attitude of uniting theory with practice. Incidentally, even the word *māyā*, which in the Advaita Vedānta philosophy means the inscrutable principle of cosmic illusion, retains in the *R̥gveda* the sense of the primordial unity of wisdom and action.

Philological evidences like these are reminiscent of ancient Greece before the birth there of the idealist outlook<sup>42</sup>:

"Prior to the fifth century, not the contrast but the unity of thought and deed is uppermost. In the epic and lyric, knowledge is practical; to know is to know how; wisdom is

still in action and therefore power to act. Heraclitus, the first of the philosophers to turn to this theme, assumes as a matter of course that *logos* and *sophia* carry the double reference to true words (and thought) and right deed."

With the growth of slavery and the consequent degradation of manual labour as something by nature slavish, wisdom wants to free itself from its old bond with action, and therefore also from the material world with which, through action, man has intercourse. This tendency culminates in Plato:

"For Plato wisdom meant not the knowledge of nature, but of super-nature constituted by ideas... As for art—that power to control nature, the slow acquisition of which by man Democritus regarded as identical with the self-differentiation with animals—it was relegated by Plato to a kind of limbo. It belonged to the sphere of opinion, the bastered knowledge of the slave, not the truth of the philosopher."<sup>43</sup>

A similar development takes place in India and culminates in Upaniṣadic idealism. For the present, we are trying to explore the sub-soil of this idealism. The art of poetry as understood by the ancient poets gives us a clue to it. Let us take up this clue again.

We hear of a few female poets whose compositions find place in the *Ṛgveda* (Bṛhaddevtā ii.82-4). One of them is called Ghoṣā. She sums up her song, saying, 'Oh Aśvins, I have composed this song for thee in the way in which the Bhṛguś fashion the chariot' (x.39.14). Though expressed in different words, the idea reoccurs in the *Ṛgveda*: We shall make songs for Indra in the way in which the Bhṛguś fashion the chariot (iv.16.20).

Who are the Bhṛguś, whose manual skill the poets want so admiringly to imitate? Commenting on Ghoṣā's poem, Sāyaṇa answers: 'Because of their connection with action (*karmayogāt*), the Ṛbhūś are here referred to as the Bhṛguś.' The answer is apparently peculiar. The Ṛbhūś stand for a community of Vedic deities while the name Bhṛguś 'appears

in the historical character of the designation of a tribe.<sup>44</sup> Why should the 'connection with action' create in the commentator's imagination such a substitution of the deities by the tribesmen?

Sāyana mentions no ground for this and thus leaves us only to conjecture. One of the conjectures is that the commentators's imagination is saturated with Vedic mythology, in which the Ṛbhus occupy a peculiar position. They are originally only human beings, but they are eventually raised to the status of the deities because of 'their connection with action'—their craftsmanship or labour skill—a very important form of which is making excellent chariots. Could it be that all this leads the commentator so easily to associate the Ṛbhus with the Bhṛigus because of the mention of the activity of chariot-making?

In any case, one point is beyond doubt. Discussing the manual skill of chariot making, Sāyana is easily reminded of the Ṛbhus. This is important, because it leads us to see a fascinating feature of early Vedic mythology: manual work, far from carrying any social stigma about it, is considered so important that it raises ordinary human beings to the status of the Vedic deities. We quote Macdonell's summary<sup>45</sup> of the relevant evidences of the *Ṛgveda*:

"Besides the higher gods of the Veda there are a number of mythical beings not regarded as having the divine nature fully and originally. The most important of these are Ṛbhus. They are celebrated in eleven hymns of the *Ṛgveda* and are mentioned by name over a hundred times... The Ṛbhus are about a dozen times called by the patronymic name of Saudhanvana, son of Sudhanvan, 'the good archer'... With Indra they help mortals to victory (iv.37.6) and are invoked with him to crush foes (vii.48.3). They are said to have obtained the friendship of Indra by their skilful work (iii.60.3; iv.35.7 & 9), for it is they who fashioned his steeds... The Ṛbhus are characteristically deft-handed (*suhastāh*) and skilful (iv.33.1. & 8; etc.), their skilful deeds being incomparable (iii.60.4). They are frequently said to have

acquired the rank of gods in consequence of their marvellous skill. Through their wondrous deeds they obtained divinity (iii.60.1). By their skilful deeds they became gods and immortal, alighting like eagles in heaven (iv.35.8). They are men of the air who by their energy mounted to heaven (i.110.6). For their skilful services they went on the path of immortality to the host of the gods (iv. 35.3), obtaining immortality among the gods and their friendship (iv. 33.3 & 4; iv. 35.3; iv. 36.4). But they were originally mortals, children of Manu, who by their industry acquired immortality (iii. 60.3; i.110.4)... They went to the gods and obtained the sacrifice, or a share of the sacrifice, among the gods through their skilful work (i.20.1 & 8; i.21.6 & 7)... They are thus sometimes expressly invoked as gods (iv.36.5; iv.37.1). Like the higher gods they are besought to give prosperity and wealth (iv. 33.8; iv.37.5) in cattle, horses, heroes (iv.34.10) and to grant vigour, nourishment, offspring, dexterity (i.111.2). They grant treasure to the *soma* presser (i.20.7; iv.35.6). He whom they help is invincible in fight (iv.36.6)."

Such then is the peculiarity of the mythological imagination of the ancient Vedic people. Excellence in manual skill is so marvellous that it raises ordinary human beings to the status of the gods. Since mythology does not grow out of nothing, all this wants us to infer a society— with its characteristic mode of consciousness—in which the craftsmen along with their craft retain great prestige.

Let us try to follow up the suggestion of Vedic mythology a little further.

How do the Ṛbhus acquire so much excellence in arts and crafts? From whom do they receive the training for it? The *Bṛhaddevatā* answers<sup>46</sup>:

"They became pupils of Tvaṣṭṛ. Tvaṣṭṛ instructed them in every art in which he was a master (*tvaṣṭra*). The All-gods, who are thoroughly versed in the arts, challenged them. They then made for all the gods vehicles and weapons. They made the nectar-yielding cow... of Bṛhaspati, then for the Áśvins a divine car with three seats, and for Indra his two bay steeds;

also what they did through Agni who had been dispatched to them by the gods... And Tvaṣṭṛ and Savitr, and the god of gods Prajāpati, summoning all the gods, bestowed immortality on the Ṛbhus."

This leads us to see the greatest craftsman of Vedic imagination. The poets call him Tvaṣṭṛ and describe in various ways his skill in arts and crafts<sup>47</sup>:

"He is a skilful workman (i.85.9; iii.54.12) producing various objects showing the skill of an artificer. He is in fact the most skilful of workmen, versed in crafty contrivances (x.53.9). He is several times said (v.31.4; etc.) to have fashioned (*taks*) the bolt of Indra. He also sharpens the iron axe of Brahmanaspati (x.53.9). He formed a new cup (i.20.6) which contained the food of the *asura* (i.110.3) or the beverage of the gods (i.161.5; iii.35.5). He thus possesses vessels out of which the gods drink (x.53.9)."

Interestingly, these ancient poets—because they are yet to know the mystery of biological reproduction—are inclined to see the hands of the great craftsman even behind the creation of men and animals<sup>48</sup>:

"The *Rgveda* further states that Tvaṣṭṛ adorned all beings with form (x.110.9.). He develops the germ in the womb and is the shaper of all forms, human and animal (i.88.9; viii.91.8; x.184.1). Similar statements are frequently made in later Vedic texts, where he is characteristically a creator of forms. He himself is called omniform (*viśvarūpa*) more often than any other deity in the *Rgveda*. As fashioner of living forms, he is frequently described as presiding over generation and bestowing offspring (iii.4.9; etc.). Thus he is said to have fashioned husband and wife for each other from the womb (x.10.50). He has produced, and nourishes, a great variety of creatures (iii.55.19)... He is indeed a universal father, for he produced the whole world."

Even some of the great Vedic gods—Bṛhaspati, Agni, Indra—are sometimes conceived of as being created by this master craftsman.<sup>49</sup>

But who is this great god that gives shape practically to

everything known to the Vedic poets? The best clue to him is to be found in his name<sup>50</sup>:

"The word (*tvastṛ*) is derived from a rare root *tvaks*, of which only one verbal form, besides some nominal derivatives, occurs in the *R̥gveda*, and the cognate of which, *thwaks*, is found in the *Avesta*. It appears to be identical in meaning with the common root *taks*, which is used with the name of *Tvaṣṭṛ* in referring to the fashioning of Indra's bolt. The meaning therefore appears to be the 'Fashioner' or 'Artificer'."

There are thus grounds to think that this god is only a personification of craftsmanship. In any case, his name is precariously near the Vedic word for the carpenter—*takṣan* or *taṣṭṛ*—both derived from the root *taks*, meaning manual skill. In the songs ennobling the activities of his apprentices—the *Ṛbhus*—the most frequently recurring verb is the same. "The same verb *taks*, 'to fashion', is generally used with reference to the manual skill of the *Ṛbhus* as that of *Tvaṣṭṛ*."<sup>51</sup>

From what we can infer about the general theoretical temper of the early Vedic poets, therefore, it is only to be expected that in their view the "working hands" still retain a great deal of glory and there is no question of these being pushed to the background by the glory of the products of the head—pure wisdom or pure reason as conceived by the Upaniṣadic idealists. Vedic mythology satisfies this expectation.

Macdonell notes<sup>52</sup> that Vedic poets take no special care to describe the physical features of *Tvaṣṭṛ* and the *Ṛbhus*. But there is a significant exception to this. The poets do take special care in describing the glory of their working hands. Thus we are repeatedly told that *Tvaṣṭṛ* has wonderful hands: he is *supāṇi* (3.54.12; 7.34.20; 6.49.9), he is *suhasta* (7.35.12), he is *su-gabhasti* (6.49.9)—all referring to the dexterity of his hands. Sometimes these adjectives are repeated in the same verse, evidently for placing special emphasis on this feature of the god. The same is true of the *Ṛbhus*. The praise of their

working hands is about the only important aspect of their physical feature that we read in the *R̥gveda*.<sup>53</sup>

As if to make their own attitude to manual labour fully clear, the poets tell us that some of the great Vedic gods share this glory of Tvaṣṭṛ and the Ṛbhus. Excellent working hands are also possessed by Mitra and Varuṇa<sup>54</sup>, Indra<sup>55</sup>, Agni<sup>56</sup>, Savitr<sup>57</sup>, and others. One of the lesser poets of the later period, described as the son of the female poet Ghōṣā already quoted, has the name Suhastya, 'one with dextrous hands'. In the poem attributed to him (x.41), he praises his own working hands (x.41.3) evidently in imitation of the gods.

Such then are the ancient conditions as remembered by the Vedic literature. In the later Vedic period, however, things are strikingly different. In the words of Engels<sup>58</sup>,

"... the more modest productions of the working hands retreated into the background, the more so since the mind that planned the labour was able, at a very early stage of the development of society, to have the labour that had been planned carried out by other hands than its own. All merit for the swift advance of civilisation was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain. Men became accustomed to explain their actions as arising out of thoughts instead of their needs; and so in the course of time there emerged that idealistic outlook on the world which, specially since the fall of the world of antiquity, has dominated men's minds. It still rules them."

This brings us to the Upaniṣadic period—the period in which, along with the new norm of living on the surplus produced by the labour of others, there emerges the cult of secret wisdom, supposed to be the possession of a fortunate few of the times. This wisdom, completely cut off from action, develops a sense of delusional omnipotence of its own: it wants to dictate terms to reality and to be recognised as the only reality.



## REFERENCES

1. Haraprasada Racanāvali (in Bengali) Vol. ii, Calcutta 1960, 389ff. This remarkable paper remains yet to be translated from Bengali.
2. G. Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society*, Vol. i, London 1949, 440.
3. J. Eggeling, in : *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. xii, Introduction IX-X.
4. To the evidences mentioned by me in my *Indian Philosophy*, New Delhi 1964, 87ff., the following may be added:  
 Gautama x.5: Agriculture and trade are also lawful for a Brahmin provided he does not do the work himself.  
 Gautama xvii.7: A Brahmin may eat the food given by a trader who is not at the same time an artisan.  
 Manu x. 99-100: But a Śūdra being unable to find service with the twice-born and threatened with the loss of his sons and wife, may maintain himself by handicrafts. Let him follow those mechanical occupations and those various practical arts by following which he can best serve the twice-born.
5. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa vii.29. This may be read along with the typical *dharmaśāstra* passages defining the cultural and economic status of the Śūdras:  
 Gautama xii. 4-7: Now if he listens intentionally to a recitation of the *Veda*, his ears shall be filled with molten tin or lac. If he recites Vedic texts, his tongue shall be cut out. If he remembers them, his body shall be split in two. If he assumes a position equal to that of the twice-born in sitting, lying down, in conversation or on the road, he shall undergo corporal punishment.  
 Gautama x.50: The Śūdra belongs to the fourth caste, which has one birth only. For him also are prescribed truthfulness, meekness, and purity. He shall use the cast-off shoes, umbrellas, garments; and mats of the higher castes and eat the remnants of their food, and live by practising mechanical arts.  
 Manu x. 129: No collection of wealth must be made by a Śūdra, even though he be able to do it; for a Śūdra, who has acquired wealth gives pain to a Brahmin.
6. I have tried to go into some details of this in *Essays in Honour of Professor Susobhan Sarkar* (New Delhi 1976).
7. B. Farrington, *Greek Science* (Penguin 1963 ed.) 27.
8. K. Abraham (the Psycho-Sexual Differences Between Hysteria

and *Dementia Praecox*, 1908) starts this line of analysis in recent psychology.

9. The most outstanding Upaniṣadic philosopher representing this line of thought is Uddālaka Āruṇi (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* vi). See particularly W. Ruben, *Studies in Ancient Indian Thought*, Calcutta 1966, 77ff.
10. Ch. Up. vii. 1.1–4; Māṇḍ. Up. i. 1.5. The most dreadful feature of this is the contempt for medical science. See *Manu* iii.152; iii.180; iv.212; iv.220; etc. Interestingly, the Aśvins—the greatest of the physician-gods of the *R̥gveda* (i.57.6; viii.18.8; viii.86.1; x.39; viii.9.6 & 15; etc. etc.)—require in the *Brāhmaṇa* period ritual purification for their medical past: see Śat. Br. iv. 1.5.1ff. This changed attitude to medical science is traceable to the *Yajurveda*: Tait. Sam. vi. 4.9; Mait. Sam. iv. 6.2.
11. R. Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, Oxford University Press, 1951 ed., 58–59.
12. JAOS 1929, 97ff.
13. A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index*, London 1958, 422; *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, Harvard 1925, 497.
14. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy*, 493.
15. Keith, *Vedic Index* i, 206.
16. Br. Up. ii.4; iv.5.
17. This is a persistent theme of practically all the principal Upaniṣads—Ait. Up. iv. 6; v.4; Kauṣ. Up. ii.14; Kena Up. xii; Ch. Up. i.4.5; Br. Up. ii.4.3; etc.; Isā Up. xi; Maitrī Up. vi.9; Śvet. Up. iii.7; Muṇḍ. Up. ii.2.11; Kaṭha Up. vi.8; vi.18; Praś. Up. iii. 11–12; etc. etc.
18. Rv. i.43.9; i.84.4; viii. 48.12; ix.3.1; etc.etc.
19. The songs in praise of gifts (*dāna-stutis*) are very late and do not prove a vastly propertied class in the early Vedic period.
20. D. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata*, New Delhi 1959, Ch. viii.
21. Ib. 565 ff.
22. Gautama x.29–30.
23. Br. Up. iv.1.1.
24. Ib. iv. 2.4.
25. Śat. Br. xi.6.3.2; Br. Up. iii.1.2.
26. Br. Up. iii. 9.28.
27. Ib. iv. 1.3; iv.1.5; iv.1.6; iv.1.7.
28. Ib. iv.3.14; iv.3.15; iv.3.16; iv.3.33; iv.4.7.
29. Ch. Up. iv. 4.5–iv.5.1.
30. Keith, *Vedic Index* i, 100.
31. Ch. Up. iv. 2.3; cf. Kauṣ. ii. 1 & ii. 2.

32. N. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Bombay 1946, 18-19.
33. *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, Translated by Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. ii, Oxford 1923, 130.
34. Rhys Davids ib. 129.
35. Plato, *Phaedo* 66. Tr. H. Cary (Everyman's Library).
36. Br. Up. iv. 4.2.
37. Rv. i.187.
38. Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata* Ch. viii.
39. Rv. i.38.14.
40. Rv. x.119.
41. Keith, *Vedic Index* i, 297, 302.
42. G. Vlastos, quoted by B. Farrington in *Philosophy for the Future*, New York 1949, 4.
43. Farrington ib. p. 5.
44. Rv. vii.13.6; viii. 3.9; viii.6.18; etc.
45. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Strasbourg 1897, 131-132.
46. Brhaddevatā iii.83-8. Tr. Macdonell.
47. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* 116. Rv. x.8. describes Indra decapitating the three-headed son of Tvaṣṭr while an Indus seal depicts somebody with three heads. These are about the only solid evidences for D.D. Kosambi's strange conjecture that Tvaṣṭr is originally an Indus priest (or deity?). In defence of this conjecture, it is necessary not only to depend on a large number of further assumptions but moreover to overlook many positive evidences of the Vedic literature.
48. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* 116.
49. Ib.
50. Ib. 117.
51. Ib. 132.
52. Ib. 116, 131.
53. Rv. iv. 33.8; iv. 35.3; iv. 35.9; v. 42.12; x. 66.10.
54. Rv. i. 71.9; iii. 56.7; iii. 57.2.
55. Rv. iii. 33.6.
56. Rv. i. 109.4.
57. Rv. iii. 55.4.
58. F. Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, Moscow 1964 ed., 180.